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A DEFECT IN AMERICAN ART EDUCATION

Despite our notable achievements in art, we Americans have certain weaknesses which now and again are strongly emphasized. One is claiming special attention at the present time. Now is the St. Louis Fair and the lessons taught by the exhibits being considered by the various nations that vied with each other in the American city last summer. Comparisons in the various branches of exhibits are being made by the world's experts; and while America is receiving her meed of praise, her defects are also being shown in the criticisms that are made.

Baron Myrbach, of the Vienna School of Industrial Art, says that the United States has reached a high plane in sculpture, painting, and drawing,

while the arts and crafts are comparatively in their infancy; and this he thinks leaves an opening through which the superior Austrian products may find a market in America. Considering Myrbach's declaration, and looking over the field, we must admit that he strikes at the weakest point in our pretensions to art. Industrial art does not receive the encouragement it deserves. Of the vast sums which are spent in educating the people there is but a moiety applied to this branch, and that, too, in a limited number of localities.

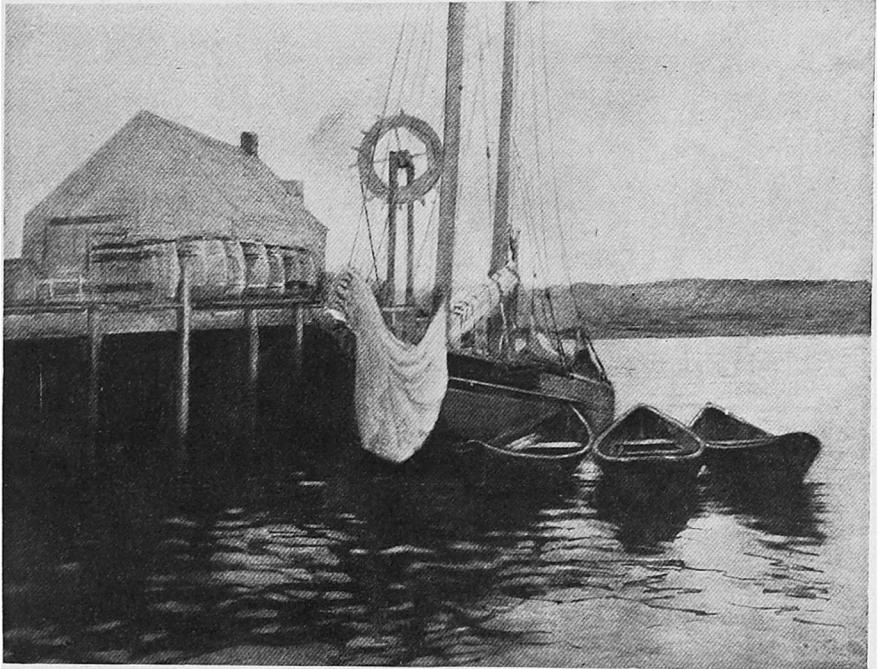
There is but little encouragement given manual training, and even what is given usually meets with a very formidable opposition. There is certainly room for argument against it as our present school



THE TROLLS
By Signor Fosnes
(Minnesota State Art Exhibition)

system is conducted. The facilities are usually such as give the pupil a very superficial smattering, and as time is consumed and the child is also overwhelmed with literary branches, even beyond his capacity to acquire, manual training only adds to an already grievous burden that breaks down the other part of his education and makes him a failure all along the line.

A lack of facilities, and an inability to make manual training fit into our school system as an important branch, is therefore the prime



FISHING-BOATS AT GRAND MANAN

By Gertrude J. Barnes

(Minnesota State Art Exhibition)

cause of the backwardness of this wholly important branch that aids the young man to lay the groundwork for future usefulness in life.

The American people, therefore, as a people, it is observed, are lamentably deficient in arts and crafts, even the German empire recently remarking "that the United States will be a great market for the arts and crafts of Germany."

The thoroughly representative collection of the arts and crafts of Germany and Austria at the exposition should arouse the American people from their apathy along these lines, and even where this branch is now receiving attention it should give an impetus to origi-



CARRARA MARBLE BYZANTINE INLAID FOUNT

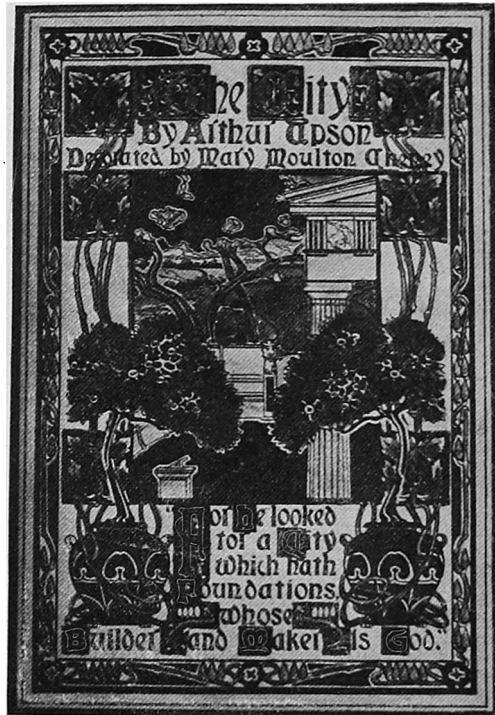


nality, and shake people out of the rut they are following in wearisome pursuance of the Italian Renaissance, Louis XV. and XVI., Empire and Colonial designs, Sheraton and Chippendale.

Break away from these, show appreciation of the worthy original of the twentieth century, and American men and women with ideas will be encouraged and come to the front with work that is worthy of the American brand. But with a mania for Old World ideas alone, and severe criticism of everything American, whether deserving or not, American ideas of arts and crafts will continue in the background.

In this connection a prevailing fault of our arts and crafts workers may be mentioned—designers are too prone to imitate or copy the products of the Old World. This, doubtless, is due rather to habit or deference to a European vogue than to poverty of ideas. Something peculiarly American, something distinctive of our national life, would reflect more credit on our earnest workers than slavish allegiance to what has caught the fancy of an alien public. This has been done—witness our mission furniture, the pottery and needlework turned out at Newcomb College, and other products savoring of the New World, that have appeared in recent years—and may be done again. Our painters and sculptors who have attained the amplest and soundest meed of fame are those who have been courageous enough to denounce schools and develop their talent in their own way. It should be the same in the broader and in many senses more vital field of arts and crafts. A new life should be prolific of new ideas, and it ill behoves the workers of this country to take hints from foreign art magazines, and ring changes on designs that emanate from conditions and circumstances utterly unlike our own.

R. C.



TITLE-PAGE FOR BOOK
By Mary Moulton Cheney
Minnesota State Art Exhibition